INTERVIEW OF FRANKLIN DEE SIDES, JR.

INTERVIEWEE	Franklin Sides
DATE	October 11th, 2018
INTERVIEWERS	Tealey Ellis and Judith Robertson
TRANSCRIBER	Brandon Widner
LOCATION	Fairview Branch Library

TEALEY ELLIS: My name is Tealey Ellis and I am a volunteer with the Fairview North Carolina Library Oral History Project. The information from this interview will be available at the North Carolina Room in the Pack Library in Downtown Asheville, North Carolina. Today I am interviewing Franklin Sides at the Fairview North Carolina Library, and thank you Mr. Sides for sitting for this interview.

JUDITH ROBERTSON: This is Judith Robertson recording the oral history of Franklin Sides at the Fairview Library at 1:10 PM on October the 11th, 2018 for the Fairview Oral History Project for the North Carolina Room at Pack Library in the Buncombe County Library System. The conditions of use form for sound and video recordings has been signed by the interviewee.

TE: I noticed Mr. Sides, on the life history form that you completed, you indicated that you were born in Greensboro, North Carolina. When did you move here? When did your parents move here?

FRANKLIN SIDES: My parents didn't, I moved here in 1980. Not to Buncombe County to Brevard, and then we moved to Buncombe County in 1987 when my son was born.

TE: Okay, what made you decide to come to Western North Carolina, to the mountains?

FS: I had a high school friend whose mother ran a camp, Eagle's Nest camp, over in Pisgah Forest. They wanted to change the food there and make it healthier food, and I was a real foodie, and still am, but basically, I came to try to change the food to be healthier at that and I never left.

TE: Good reason. And you said, how long did you live in the Brevard Area?

FS: It was about ‘87, it was seven years. Cause I was there in '80 and we moved in seven, ‘87 yeah.

TE: What prompted you to move to Buncombe County and Fairview in particular, or if you did?

FS: Well, I worked at the camp for several years, but then changed jobs and went to work for the Mother Earth News magazine. They had an eco-village out there where they taught people solar energy and how to garden and all that. My schooling was in agriculture, and so when the gardeners that were there retired, they asked me if I wanted to take the position, and so we did that. But then they shut that down in 1987, and they told my wife and I just to find somewhere else to rent a house that had a garden spot so we could do the garden and write articles for the magazine. So, we did move up to Gerton for one season, but then fairly quickly moved down into Susie Hamilton's, and did the garden there for 5 years for the magazine.

TE: And when did you move to your current location?

FS: Well, my son was six, so 87 plus six is ‘93?

TE: Sounds right to me. The house where you're living now, when you moved there was it a new house? Was it an older home? What kind of history might that house have?

FS: Well, there was raw land when we moved there, so we were living at Susie and Will Hamilton's. And by that point the Mother News went under and we were still living there and I was working for the Clarkes on their dairy, some. I was milking cows on Sunday as a relief person, but also doing some farm work. So, they closed the dairy, sold all the cows, it was like in the fall, like now. They had a field full of corn and they had a lot of things that needed to be done, to close it up, and they didn't have money because they sold all the cows, there was no milk money. So, they approached me and asked if I would be willing to barter for land. I never paid any money for the two acres that we got. And we were one of the few people the Clarkes have ever even sold land to. They gave us an area we could pick from, and we picked a spot. I did various things, like I harvested the silage corn, planted it back in grass, built the trellis up at Sherrill's Inn, and just did various things and just kept tabs of how much I worked until the land was paid for.

When we moved on to it, we lived in a school bus. We just put a school bus there. Then we had an old camper that we basically turned into the bathroom and the kitchen, and then the bus was the living room and the bedroom. We had two [children], a three year old and a six year old. Then we lived there all summer in the bus, and then we had a barn raising, a house raising basically, and had about forty or forty-five people we knew in the community who came. We started on Saturday morning, and by suppertime, when we had a big potluck, it was dried in. Not finished, but it had the frame and the roof, and it was all ready, so that was nice. The fun thing about it was the whole community was involved. My youngest son was three years old and he had a bunch of friends that were three and I made these patterns with green dots where they could drive nails. We had these trusses and they all had their little tool belts with their little teeny… they wanted to use little nails. We would set it and then get it to where it wouldn't move and then turn them loose, and it would have like fifty nails in one truss, you know? But they were three years old! They loved it.

So anyways, we built that and the plan on it, it was only six hundred square feet. It was like basically a one room with everything in one room. It was off the grid, it was powered by solar power, and we had spring water. We were supposed to just do that a year, while I built the big house. Well seven years later, my wife said, "You either build a house or I'm leaving!"

By that point I was working for the post office. I had the wherewithal, so that was part of the reason it never happened. We joke about this, but at that point I had never borrowed money, I didn't have a credit card, I didn't have anything. But at that point I was working at the post office and went to a banker friend and said, "How do I get credit enough so I can borrow money to build this house?" He said, "Well you got to get this credit card for $500, but you've got to give us $500 upfront." It's like a credit card, but they've got your money. So, I did that for a while and the post office is a fairly secure job, and so after I worked there long enough that I looked good and that I had a good job, and I had some sort of credit record that I'd pay my bills, they lent us the money. A construction loan.

I got the construction loan, it's all community, 'cause you know Bill McCurdy, another friend who was a builder, basically said he was my builder. I did the building, [but] because [I wasn't] a licensed contractor and in order to get the loan for the bank you had to have a licensed contractor. He would come by every once in a while and check and make sure I wasn't doing something too crazy. Anyway, we built the house, my boys at that point were, ten and thirteen, I guess, but they were useful at that point. We did most of the work. We would subcontract out things that made sense, like sheet rock. They can put it in for cheaper than you can just go buy the sheet rock. It didn't make sense to do it yourself. But we put hardwood floors down, and my boys would lay it all out and I would come behind them and put it in. We built this, I guess it's more like, maybe counting the basement, an 1800 square foot house.

TE: Okay, that was a lot of work.

FS: That's where we live now. The school bus left, the other house was used for various things throughout the years. At one point we renovated it and my mother was going to live there,

and then my wife's mother did live there for a little bit. But now we just rent it out, rent it to other people.

TE: By any chance do you have any pictures of the original house that you all built when you had the forty or fifty so people there helping? And any pictures of the construction of the house that you're currently living in? The bus?

FS: Oh yeah, my wife is a big picture maker, but there's actually a magazine article about the building of the house that we built.

TE: And what would that have been? Where?

FS: It was in "Back Home Magazine," which was an offshoot of Mother Earth News. When Mother Earth News shut down, all the writers and people started another magazine called "Back Home." Which is not around anymore, but we have a copy with those pictures in it. I have to find it, but we do have a copy.

TE: Would that be something that you would be willing to allow us to scan?

FS: Yeah, and it talks about what it costs us to build it, the Mother Earth News-y kind of stuff about the power system and how we did it. It would be an interesting thing. I'm sure we have pictures of us building the regular house too. We're bound to.

TE: Anything that you or your wife could find like that we would greatly appreciate. And it would add so much to the history of Fairview. And I think that kind of brings us to the point of Lord's Table.

FS: Lord's Acre.

TE: Acre, I'm sorry. How did that happen? And how does it work.

FS: We were both gardeners for the Mother Earth News. Susan was actually my apprentice. I married my helper, I guess. We have like ten interns every year, and I ended up marrying one of them. But she's a writer and so she ended up… we kind of shared the job for several years. She did a lot of writing and we gardened together and raised our kids, but when the Mother Earth News went under and I had the different jobs I had in the Post Office, we chose to home school our children. So, we home schooled our children until they were both eighteen. When she finished that, she did do some nannying for these folks that live in this house right here, the McNairs. At one point she kind of hit this thing where she was empty nest syndrome. This church right here, Fairview Christian Fellowship, had gotten this idea, they wanted to do a giving garden. A garden that would give food to the pantry. One of the board members for the pantry, Pat Stone, who was also our boss at the Mother Earth News, he was an editor at Mother Earth News. That's why we ended up here really, he lived here and when we had to find a place we got a place near him so that he could...

TE: Is that Becky Stone's husband?

FS: Becky Stone's husband. So that was going on here, and they were talking to Susan and I and they had us come over and I was working for the Post Office full time. They had us come over to look at where to put it. They wanted to put it right outside there where that big green area was, but we said you can't put it there, that's the septic system.

Independent of all this another church, the Chapel Door, which is off of Joe Jenkins Road, did the same thing. They decided they wanted to start a giving garden. Through community connections, they found each other. The thing is that Chapel Door had access to land, they had three acres they were on. They had nine acres that they had a hold down on it that they could buy but had full use of it while they were deciding whether they were going to buy it. They

worked it out to do the garden there. Then a board was formed, but it was some of the people from that church, some from different community members, Will Hamilton was on it. Trying to think of who the old folks... But basically it was a mix of some people from this church, some from that church, and other community members. Steve Norris.

At that point I was not, it was my wife's gig. I was working full time at the post office. But she asked me to go look at the water situation over there. I went and looked at it, looked at the land, and said "Where is the water coming from?" And she said, "Just that well over there." And I went and looked at the well, and it had like two gallons a minute, and I said "You're not going to be able to have a garden here with two gallons a minute." I did all this work, figuring up how they were going to get water, and they could get it out of this creek, and just everything. I came and presented it to the board, so they could make decisions, and by the end of the meeting, I was on the board. I worked myself into it. Prior to that they had to pick the Gardner, and that's how Susan was picked. But this church was all ready for her to be it, but the other church felt like, and it's probably a proper way, they did interviews and she had all the skills in what you need to do it. They did interviews and she was the one who was hired as the garden manager.

We basically have, for years, it's been technically her job and I've been on the board. Although, I resigned from the board two years ago. Basically, she gets paid very little and I get paid nothing. We, up until two years ago, it's been ten years so 2008, right when the whole crunch happened. Not a very good time for a non-profit to start trying to raise money. For eight of those years, we would keep the interns or apprentices, they lived with us. We built a couple of bedrooms downstairs. Every summer about March or so, we'd bring in usually college age students, and they would stay with us through November. Now we've built two little tiny houses down there and they live on the property. It's grown, I mean it's grown over the years. The other connection I kind of have is one of the neighbors across the street, June Grimes, he has all kinds of tractors. His wife's family is really old, like Patton Avenue. Her maiden name is Patton. He owns the Harry's On the Hill. Anyway, we were needing a tractor when we were first going to break the ground there. Susie Hamilton went to June Grimes to ask if we could borrow a tractor to do it. He said, "That's really funny, I just had my checkbook out. I had read an article about you in the Town Crier and I was getting ready to write you a check." He said, "You can use the tractor any time you want to."

TE: Awesome!

FS: But he said, "Who's going to operate it?" She told him me. June and I kind of have a little bit of a history. So, it's been for 10 years that we can use his equipment but I'm the only one who can operate it.

TE: You're trustworthy, I guess. And can manage it.

FS: Well, he knows my skill level and that I can handle a tractor.

TE: I've only lived in Fairview for a year, so how is the food distributed? How does that work?

FS: Well, it's known as community efforts, its trifold really. Originally, we just went to the food pantry, which is in the basement of the gym. They have the vetting process where you have to live in the Fairview community, although they added Gerton later. There's a certain area they support. And you have to have certain financial things. We didn't have to do any vetting, it was a great thing. We, once a week, we bring the food there. At first, we used to just bring it and they would put it and it was just there, but several years back one of the garden managers came up with the idea that we should treat it like a market. It would be outside and separate from the regular food where they go get canned food. We put up one of those regular market tents like they have and they come out, pick their vegetables out. That gave us more of an opportunity to interact with the clients, as we call them. And also them be able to ask questions, or we might have collards there that day, we might cook some collards, and then they can taste them. Believe it or not, a lot of these people are one generation away from this kind of food, their grandparents cooked that way and ate that way, but their parents didn't. They grew up eating different. In the first year we had kale there, nobody would touch it. We did some stuff to try to get it going and

then when we ran out, when the season ran out, they were asking for it. “Have anymore of that kale?!” It was just getting them used to eating certain things.

TE: How do you select your interns? What is that process?

FS: I should clarify at this point, at this point I'm just a volunteer. It's really Susan's baby.

TE: Well, what's the selection process?

FS: The process is: there's several online things where people who are wanting to be interns go and look. Organic Growers School has a list kind of thing, and there’s other lists all over the country. You put a description of who you are, and then people are looking, it's all on Google. They'll put in "internships Asheville area" or North Carolina, and ours will be one of the names that pops up. That's the main way, but there's word of mouth. We do work really well with Warren Wilson, which has a service learning program. We have one intern there now, who was a Warren Wilson student. Not every year, but we do end up with a lot of Warren Wilson students. They have an agriculture program there, and they have that "serve program." That's basically it. When they were living with us, I had some veto power.

TE: I would think so.

FS: Now that they're not living with us, I had to stay out of the selection. Unless my opinion is asked. Susan is the one who is going to have to work with them all the time. Basically, they come from all over the country. We have one that's from Raleigh right now. But we have had them from Oregon, California...

E: That was my next question, where they come from. Have you had any interns selected from out of the country?

FS: No, nobody out of the country. One Puerto Rican woman but she was living in New York at that point.

TE: What's the age range generally?

FS: We've had, the very first time we had a 35 year old man, and a 24 year old. It's a big gambit on that. The Puerto Rican woman was probably in her 30s too, but most of them outside of college age, because we have two types of interns. We have the full, they run the whole season from March to November. Usually a college student can't do that. Then we have what we call Townies, they don't live on the property, they have to find their own place to live. They are only usually there for the summer, when schools out. We've had some high schoolers, but usually they're just short term. Sometimes they're not full time. They may come Tuesdays and Thursdays.

TE: Do you have any repeats on interns or is that not allowed?

FS: We've not, they don't really need it. Hopefully we're doing a good job and after one year they don't need to come back. But we've some who came as an intern, and as we've got bigger Susan has metamorphosed into more of a programs director, she was the executive director until we hired an executive director. We eventually hired a part time garden manager, that way they would come as an apprentice one year and whoever was the best and we needed someone, we could pick from them. We've had that happen several times where somebody comes in but then the next year they actually run the garden. Which is perfect because they know, and it's under Susan's direction.

TE: Do you have any converts who have ended up staying in the area?

FS: Oh yeah! That definitely happens. I can't say half, but we have definitely had some. The Puerto Rican woman did. The very first one, he's gone now, but he was here for several years. Even last year I think he was here, and he'll probably be back. We've definitely had ones that have. And the other thing along that line that we're proud of is that we've had ones that have trained with us and then gone somewhere else and done something similar. A different project but with the same idea. They've taken what they've learned and because the interns don't only come to learn how to garden. They're allowed to come to the board meetings, they're allowed to be involved in all that, what a non-profit is, how to interact with the community, the whole gambit. When they leave here, a lot of interns that come to Western North Carolina work on farms, like Annie Louise and them's vegetable farm down there, or some other. They come to learn how to make money growing food. Most of ours come to learn to garden or they're coming because they have more of a service kind of drive. They want to learn to work with children or work with...

TE: I would think that anyone who came as an intern and then went back to their area or another place and tried to start the same kind of thing is quite an honor to your program.

FS: Yeah.

TE: What about your sons? Are they involved on their own doing this kind of thing or have they gone in different directions all together?

FS: The oldest son, Walker, manages the animals at Hickory Nut Gap Farm. When we were home schooling, the advantage of home schooling is that when you get your work done you can go play. His play was, because we bought property from them, we're just two blocks from the farm. He was in a backpack back when he was three years old when I was going down there

to milk cows. He'd been on that farm forever. When he got older, the minute he got his schoolwork done, he was down there. Helping with the baby lambs, or just wanting to hang out there. He went away, in later years, but eventually when he got through that 'young man's gotta run around a little bit," he came back and they hired him. They got a deal because he knew the land already, he knew the farms, and he's driving the same tractor I drove when I worked for them years and years ago. He's helped at the Lord's Acre, but he's got his hands full. They've always been supportive and helped. And then his wife, Cameron, works for Organic Growers School, which is a sister thing that we work with them all the time. They're definitely involved. My young son, he's actually a surgeon. He's in his residency in Delaware, so he's not living around here. Him and his wife too have been supportive financially and...

TE: How did you, when you were in charge if you will, or your wife, decide each season on the crops that you were going to plant? Were there some things that were consistent all the time, and introducing new ones, or how was that decided?

FS: My wife and I have gardened together for a long time, but we definitely have our niches, and that's really her niche. It was really her job. I tend to be soil preparations, fertilizer, cover crops, irrigation, all that's needed. I tend to be kind of a jack of all trades and can do all that fencing and all that kind of stuff. She tends to be what is the garden planner and the insects and crop rotation, and all that stuff. She's got a lot of charts and stuff. It's trial and error some, as far as what they will do.

I didn't finish, I told you it was a three-part thing. What happened maybe two years in, we had heard about this thing called a Welcome Table. There was one in Black Mountain, and we were at the old All Soul's Episcopal Church getting an award, and he was there getting an award too, so our tables were right beside each other so we talked a lot. He encouraged us to start one here. We tried to find somebody who could get the passion, 'cause we didn't have time to do it, and this woman Barbara Trombatore, a local Fairview person, and she took it on and she went and trained with him a month and then she started the Welcome Table up here underneath the church up here. That's been going on for several years.

That was a good outlet because sometimes we wouldn't have enough of something to take to the pantry, because there wasn't that much of a quantity. It was perfect to take up there, so she could prepare it for meals, or if they were damaged. One of our philosophies for the pantry is to take them the best stuff. One of the reasons we even started this project was that most of the fresh produce, quote "fresh produce", that people would get at pantries was what they were throwing away at Ingles. We tried to give them the highest quality. We feed the interns with the lesser vegetables, like stab potatoes or something like that. We also will take them here, and they'll cut the bad parts out and make something out of it. We've expanded to other places, like the Welcome Table. There's some places in Asheville, we try to serve Fairview first. But there's Bounty and Soul out of Black Mountain that does a similar thing we do. If we have extra they come. There's a couple others. There's a place that trains people to be chefs, I can't remember the name of the outfit that does that. But we'll get food to them. Those are the other outlets.

TE: What is your wife's background as far as gardening? Was it just innate in her or was it schooling? A combination of those things that has propelled her to...?

FS: So, she grew up in Miami. She, at a very young age, just really liked biology and all that kind of stuff and started trying to garden down there in that sand soil. She had always been a Mother Earth News follower. I had a partner at the Mother Earth News garden and we interviewed and put an article in the magazine for interns to come. We stopped taking applications at a thousand people. When you got a magazine that's going out to 300,000, you get a lot of people.

TE: I would think so.

FS: We couldn't handle it. She was not one of those ten. We selected ten out of that thousand. We didn't even know who she was at that point. But she came up here visiting somebody and came to the garden and it was just perfect timing. Somebody had quit and we had

a position and she wanted to do it. She came and did that. Really most of her training was done, particularly in this type of climate, was there.

TE: Persistent individual she is.

FS: She's a very studious kind of person and reads books and studies. My background, now I got a degree in Agriculture from NC State in field crop technology. That's why I tend to be more of field, soil prep, that kind of thing.

TE: You've mentioned a couple of time various kinds of machinery used for different purposes. Is there a time in the planting, harvesting, maintaining, that older types of tools people would use?

FS: My original background when I was at the Mother Earth News, we had some tractors available, but they sent me to draft horse school. I got trained in working horses and acquired some horse equipment in the process, which I still have some of it. ‘Cause when the Mother Earth's News folded, we just ended up with some of the equipment. It's funny because the way that we operate is because we drag it. We don't have horses anymore, but I still have this horse drag harrow that we drag with the Cub Tractor. The riding lawnmower basically.

TE: I know what those harrows are, my grandfather was a farmer.

FS: We do have a 1948 Cub Regular Tractor. Which was basically what replaced horses back in the day. And June Grimes, he bought that and donated it to us. It has all the equipment for it. A corn planter, it's got the whole thing. We mainly use it for potatoes. It's really good for cultivating and for hilling up and harvesting potatoes. We have a real mix. I always tell people I'm a really mixed farmer. I can work horses or I can use this equipment, or I can go to a computer to find things out. We're multi...

TE: Jack of All Trades kind of?

FS: We have no problem. We do have a lot of tools that were used more in the old days, but we're not shy of something new that works better.

TE: Do you maintain machinery that has engines when they need the work?

FS: Most of it. I'm trying to ween myself from it, away from it, so that I can let somebody else take over. But that's pretty much my job, maintaining the equipment.

TE: In addition to all the things that you have just talked about that you and your wife and children and interns over the years have done, how would you describe some other aspects of living in Fairview? What was it like?

FS: Well, our introduction to Fairview will tell you how I feel about it. We were at the Mother Earth eco-village, Susan was 7 months pregnant. So, they shut it down and we had to move. So, we found this place up on Bear Wallow. What happened then was Susan started to have the baby early. They told her she had to be in the bed for two months. Basically, I moved her up there and put her in the bed then I moved everything. Pat Stone went to this church that was in that building right there before they build the log cabin church. He just basically went to the members and said "These people are in a fix, will people volunteer to do meals for them?" For two months, people from this church cooked meals. Somebody brought us supper every night.

We got really introduced to the community and their giving. When we did move down off of Bear Wallow, into Susie Hamilton's, the whole Clarke clan down there, there was a lot of brothers and sisters and people connections. We would have farm suppers, like three or four nights a week. It would be at our house one night, maybe four or five other families would come

eat at our house. Then another night you would go to their house. Only one family would be cooking that night. Then we shared childcare. Sometimes Susan would be working and I'd be the one taking our kids to play group, or sometimes I would be doing the playgroup and other people bring their kids to us. There's another, Susan Bost, who ran the Trout Lily Market across the street. Her husband was kind of like a house husband for me part of the time, too. We would trade work. He had two boys about the same age as mine, so we would get together and work on a project at my house while we watched the boys, and kept them from killing each other. Then I would go to his house another day. Sharing the workload and doing that community thing is part of what made us decide to stay here.

TE: Certainly a good reception for you wasn't it?

Over time, there have been a lot of new folks moving in to Fairview. With your connections, or connections you might have, or just in general conversations you hear, do you think that same sense of strong community still exists today in Fairview?

FS: I worked for the post office for twenty-four years, and thirteen of them were at this post office. I know a lot about a lot of people, I may know their face and... But over the years, you saw the new people come in. You knew who they were because you were delivering their mail. At some point I delivered every route here. When I became a clerk, they were at the counter. There is a difference somewhat between the old Fairview people and the new Fairview people. The new Fairview people are easily convinced that it's a good idea. I remember one guy, François, he was a French guy who moved in here, did you know François?

JR: Oh, absolutely!

FS: We always helped each other out, me and Joe and everybody in the community, if somebody had something they need done, you come help them. François said something to me one time about, it gave me the impression that he was keeping a tally. If he had helped me three

days, then I owed him three days. We kind of had to educate him that that's not the way it works. You just helped and if you got help, you got it.

TE: I like that, I like that a lot.

FS: It is, if you really look at how a community is, if you know your next-door neighbor, you know you're living in a community. But there are pockets in Fairview where people don't even know who lives next door to them. That's not old Fairview, that's new Fairview.

TE: We have heard that in previous interviews. That that exists.

FS: And I did experience that one time in Fairview when I was working for the post office. We had a guy who had a PO box there and he got the Wall Street Journal, and they started piling up. Finally, after a month we started to try and check and see what has happened to him. Eventually the fire department went out there and found him. He was dead in his chair, his dog was dead, and he had shot the dog and shot himself.

TE: Oh my.

FS: He had next door neighbors, and for a whole month nobody said, "Where is this guy or why does it stink?"

TE: Interesting.

FS: That's the kind of community you don't want. I'm not saying that it's a perfect thing. There's always the Hatfield and the McCoy kind of feuds in any community in general. And I must admit, I fail at it too. George, my neighbor, he's lived down there forever, he's lived there

before I did, we were cordial and said, “Hi.” He went to Ingles to work and I did my job. But he retired and just recently we started doing, I needed some work done and he had a tractor, so we started. And I said, "I wish I would have connected up with him more so a long time ago." ‘Cause I like him.

TE: What kind of ethnic or racial change have you seen take place in Fairview.

FS: Well...

TE: If you have.

FS: Not a great deal. One of the struggles with the Lord’s Acre is trying to have a diversified board. Knowing Pat and Becky for so long and having a mixed racial thing. Even with delivering the mail, I knew where the pockets of African Americans were. It's not a very diversified community in a lot of ways. We've struggled somewhat trying to find, we don't want to go out and get a token minority, but we work on it and they've had some racial diversity training just recently.

The Puerto Rican woman was part African American, and it was really good to have her in the garden and have her insight. She ended up becoming a board member actually. Fairview's definitely not as diversified and I don't know why. I worked over in Edneyville, I was postmaster over there and there were several African American apple growers. Someone talked to me the other day about how basically when the Civil War was over and they ended up getting 40 acres and a mule... And that's why there's these pockets, although slavery wasn't super big here.

TE: When you first came to Fairview, what stores were available here then, or what kind of opportunities to go out and eat a meal if that's what your interest was?

FS: In '87 there was Angelo's, and I think that was it as far as restaurants. When I went to work for the post office, it was in where the... I don't even know what it's called now... the motorcycle bar across from the fire department.

TE: Yes, Brewskies is what it's called now.

FS: I joked with people and say, when they don't know where I'd worked, they'd talk about Brewskies and they'd be in a bar and say, "Yeah I used to spend 40 hours a week there." And they'd be going, "Forty hours a week?!" Actually, I've never been in it once it's been Brewskies, but I can't think of anywhere. Of course, now Angelos was a whole lot different. It was a shack and they've added and it's been upgraded. Everything was an old post office. The Hot Dog King, was the old post office, before Brewskies was. It's several of the buildings here have dominoed from being a post office.

JR: Was Food Lion here?

FS: No, Food Lion wasn't when I moved here. I actually helped. I went to work when it was at Brewskies and did a lot of the work on getting it when we moved to where it is now. Setting up the PO Boxes, and working with the contractors and getting that moved. I was really involved with that when the move happened. And that was interesting though. You talk about racial diversity, I was hired by a black woman who was the postmaster at that point, Yvonne Logan. And she still works for the post office, she's the postmaster in Hendersonville now.

TE: When you moved to Fairview, after living here for maybe a short period of time, did you feel like it was a safe community and if so, do you still have that feeling today?

FS: Especially with our closest community friends, we... I hate to put it on tape, but we've never locked our doors. Every once in a while, we'll be going away and my wife, Susan, will

want to lock the front door. But she doesn't lock the basement or any of the windows. She just wants to lock the front door.

TE: It's a good mindset.

JR: And it keeps the polite people out.

FS: Yeah, and it keeps the honest people honest. When we go to bed at night, she wants the door shut. It wouldn't bother me to leave it open, but that's more of a woman's security thing. She doesn't lock it, she just wants it shut. So, I guess that somebody couldn't just walk in. I think there was a little bit of a turn, there was a point where I wouldn't knock on anybody's door that were my closest friends, the ones we had play group with. I think in the older age it, especially with children gone now, I do knock because you don't know what a couple might be doing.

TE: This is true, too, this is true, too.

FS: It's not a security thing, more of an ethical or polite thing.

TE: If you were asked to speak to an audience and your topic that you were asked to speak on was to maybe entice or encourage people to move to Fairview, what are some things you might say to them?

FS: To entice them, I would not say money because land is expensive. It is expensive. I think that the community is really good. I would even push location because it is sort of this suburb of Asheville, but it's like once you come over Mine Hole Gap, it's like a whole other world. And you go around the curve towards my house and go out by Roy Ramsey's and that's... we were talking the day about would they ever make it four-lane out through there. And we were

saying, "Probably not." Because a lot of that land's in land conservation easements now. Especially all the Clarke and that straightaway down through there. So, there's no need to. It's not going to be developed.

I would say that uniqueness of being able to live in a rural community, but be close enough to Asheville that if you want to go eat at good restaurants and have the stuff, I think that would be a draw. We did not go to the schools that much, but I have nothing but, you know that's what people look for is good schools, and I have no problems with the schools, we just made a choice to home school. I would definitely not pooh-bah the schools to somebody who was coming.

And also the whole food thing here. If you look, they have that ASAP, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project or whatever. They have that tour every year where they tour. If you look at the farms that get toured in Fairview, you've got Flying Cloud Farm, they've got great vegetables, you've got Hickory Nut Gap that's got the best meat in North Carolina probably. You've got the blueberry farms, you have a very good place to live, you've got good food, good schools and the good community, I think I could convince somebody to live here if they had enough money to buy the land.

TE: Is there any topic or area, a question that we didn't ask that you would like to include in this interview?

FS: I don't know if anybody, because of the whole Lord's Acre and the whole old history, has anybody talk about about how the Lord's Acre got its name and that whole...

TE: Not that we've interviewed.

FS: So there's a big, long history on that. The Clarke's, Annie Ager’s, her father, when he moved down here from Chicago and he was a Presbyterian minister. He started this thing called the Farmers Federation. Was basically to try to work with farmers so they could buy their

chickens together, or buy fertilizer together and basically get an early cooperative. They would have dances and events together, but a lot of his really wealthy friends from Chicago donated a lot of money and they started an endowment called the McClure Fund, which was to help educate the Appalachian children and do those kind of projects.

But at the same time there was this thing called the Lord's Acre that was started not by Mr. McClure, but he grabbed hold of it. It ended up being kind of an international thing all over the world.

Basically, it meant that back then, there was no social security, so the church was basically the social services. The way this worked was a way to fund the churches so that they would have money to help people in need. They worked with farmers, and the farmers would donate an acre of their land, and whatever came off that acre would go to the church. So, if it was corn, they sold the corn, and the church got the money from the corn. They could donate the piglets from a sow. They could donate this sow and all the piglets would go to the church. That money could be used to help people in need. That was how the whole Lord's Acre project worked.

It was pretty big around here. When we started and our name started getting into some of the local papers, I had this 98-year-old woman call up and she goes, "I want to donate my garden to the Lord's Acre." And she lived over in Swannanoa and she had a half-acre garden plot that she didn't use and she said we could use it all we want.

We couldn't go over there and garden, but the funniest thing was we were at a conference and this young girl came up and said, "Oh the Lord's Acre, my grandmother used to talk about you all, all of the time." And she said that the story that they had was that her grandmother had donated a sow to the Lord's Acre, and she had babies, like 12 of them, some large amount. And she decided, I think I'll keep this one and I'll donate the other one to Lord's Acre. Well once she did that, all the baby pigs died.

JR: Oh no! How awful.

FS: So, the granddaughter said she had always preached to them, don't mess with the Lord. When we started the project and the board, before I was on the board, but they were trying to come up with a name. Will Hamilton was involved, and he was married to Susie Clarke, and it kind of, because it was going to be a giving garden, it felt that it was appropriate to do. So, we took on that name.

There is a connection from way past. The difference was that this was back in the '30s. After the Depression. They were helping all these people in need and we're doing a different thing. People aren't donating whole acres, but that's part of the whole process.

We have considered changing the name some, mainly because it gives the impression that its Christian organization, and that can turn some people away. It can also bring some people in. It could do both. We have talked about, they have talked about, trying to come up with a better name that was more inclusive. So that's in the works.

The land we're on now, and I didn't tell you that, that church fell apart, the Chapel Door fell apart, so now we're on this land that nobody owns and we're having to figure out what we're going to do. The man that owned it made a deal with us that if we would buy, it was six acres that the church didn't own, if we would buy three acres he would give us the other three. So, we started a campaign to raise the money and Fairview really woke up to the call. We didn't get enough, we had like two years before a balloon payment was due or something. In the end it was the McClure Fund through John Ager that saved us and basically gave us an interest free loan. As long as we're there and doing it, then we can be there forever. And if we ever leave, all we have to do is sell the land and give them the rest of the money back. We have a really deep connection with the whole Lord's Acre because of that McClure Fund. It helped do it.

JR: Can you recall the dates, the beginning and ending of the original Lord's Acre?

FS: I can give you a book that has the whole story.

JR: I just wondered if you knew off the top of your head.

FS: It's the 1930s, it was after the Depression.

JR: And when did it close down?

FS: Well, it really didn't close is the thing. It became less involved, but when I went to work over at Edneyville as postmaster, I had a Lord's Acre sticker on the back of the truck. The Methodist preacher came over and said, "What do you do with the Lord's Acre, we have a Lord's Acre Day every year." They do it different, they have like a tithing day. It's in the fall after all the apple people have got their money, and they have a day when basically the farmers donate to the church so they have money to serve people. But there is one chapter, if you want to see it, we have an extra copy. John Ager wrote a book about the history, it's called "We Plow God's Fields." It's probably in the library.

TE: It is.

FS: There's a whole chapter on the Lord's Acre, tells you when it was started and the whole story.

JR: But that's cool that it became part of the culture. That's better than it being just a project. For it to become part of the culture is really huge.

FS: And a lot of people think that he started it, but he didn't. In the book it talks about that.

TE: That book you just referenced, it's extremely interesting and informative.

FS: Oh yeah, you talk about history project it's a big part of it. It's huge. Talks about the Farmer's Federation and all that stuff.

TE: Judith, do you have any additional questions you wanted to ask?

JR: I can't think of any, right now.

TE: Thank you again Mr. Sides, this was a pleasure to hear all of this and we really appreciate you taking your time today to share that with us, and for this information to be preserved. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]